

## Mimosa Loses Favor in the Landscape



*Mimosa can be quite invasive, spreading rapidly throughout our neighborhoods and wildlands. Southern Weed Science Society photo of mimosa by Ted Bodner.*

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Once in my other life, before I met Amiable Spouse, and when I lived on Bayshore in Niceville , Florida , I had a beautiful mimosa tree. Underneath it was a comfortable bench and group of chairs where friends and I sometimes sat and visited while we enjoyed the ambiance of the garden.

In spring, pink, pleasantly fragrant, pom-pom flowers bloomed, and hummingbirds buzzed by for their share of the plentiful nectar. It was a sight to behold, and I considered myself lucky to have such a beauty in close proximity.

To my absolute dismay, the beautiful tree died. I learned that it was susceptible to a vascular wilt which was often fatal. I did notice even back then, that little mimosas came up everywhere and that I had to pull them out often unless I wanted a mimosa forest in my back yard.

And now, many years later, I'm living my next life in Valparaiso with Amiable Spouse. Mimosa trees are everywhere in Valparaiso —on the vacant lot behind me, down the street in several yards, in Lincoln Park, and almost everywhere you look. In one house that has been vacated for a few months, the front yard is quickly becoming a small mimosa jungle. I frequently pull small seedlings from my yard.

Not surprisingly, the tree is now on the hit list. It has been declared a Category I invasive exotic species by the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council. This means, of course, that it disrupts or displaces native species and damages the ecosystem. And this, friends, is not hearsay or conjecture on my part, but it is based on documented evidence.

It is not hard to see why this tree pops up everywhere. Following the flower, elongated pealike pods develop. This large seed crop almost guarantees that hundreds of trees will come up in close proximity. Cutting a tree down does no good, because it simply resprouts.

## Minosa Losess Favor in Native Landscapes

It is a strong competitor to native trees and shrubs in open areas or forest edges. Dense stands of mimosa effectively reduce the amount of sunlight and nutrients available for other plants.

Mimosa is native in a part of the world that stretches from Iran to Japan . It was introduced to this country in 1745, and is now naturalized from New Jersey and all the way across the southern United States and on to all of the states adjoining the Pacific. It takes advantage of disturbed areas and is often seen along roadsides and in open vacant lots in urban/suburban areas. Along riparian areas where its seeds are easily transported in water it is particularly troublesome.

Current management recommendations involve cutting the trees down and applying a herbicide to the freshly cut stump. While some herbicides are available to those who have an applicator's license, any of us can buy products that will work. Almost any garden center has on hand brush and stump remover products.

Even though I miss the mimosa of my other life, I am not willing to let one grow on Amiable Spouse's and my property. Now I know of its aggressive nature. I will substitute a fringe tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*) or a redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) when I want a tree similar in size to the mimosa. Then I can be sure that seedlings will not take over the world.

Furthermore, I will continue to remove the seedlings that crop up in unexpected places. I'll not be a party to the destruction of more of our native species.

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